

Congressman Ron Paul U.S. House of Representatives September 4, 2002 Arguments Against a War in Iraq

Mr. Speaker;

I rise to urge the Congress to think twice before thrusting this nation into a war without merit—one fraught with the danger of escalating into something no American will be pleased with.

Thomas Jefferson once said: "Never was so much false arithmetic employed on any subject as that which has been employed to persuade nations that it is in their interests to go to war."

We have for months now heard plenty of false arithmetic and lame excuses for why we must pursue a preemptive war of aggression against an impoverished third world nation 6000 miles from our shores that doesn't even possess a navy or air force, on the pretense that it must be done for national security reasons.

For some reason such an attack makes me feel much less secure, while our country is made more vulnerable.

Congress must consider the fact that those with military experience advocate a "go slow" policy, while those without military experience are the ones demanding this war.

We cannot ignore the fact that all of Iraq's neighbors oppose this attack, and our European allies object as well.

If the military and diplomatic reasons for a policy of restraint make no sense to those who want a war, I advise they consider the \$100 billion cost that will surely compound our serious budget and economic problems we face here at home. We need no more false arithmetic on our budget

or false reasons for pursuing this new adventure into preemptive war and worldwide nation-building.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to offer another quote from Jefferson. Jefferson said: "No country perhaps was ever so thoroughly against war as ours. These dispositions pervade every description of its citizens, whether in or out of office. We love and we value peace, we know its blessings from experience."

We need this sentiment renewed in this Congress in order to avoid a needless war that offers us nothing but trouble. Congress must deal with this serious matter of whether or not we go to war. I believe it would be a mistake with the information that is available to us today. I do not see any reason whatsoever to take young men and young women and send them 6,000 miles to attack a country that has not committed any aggression against this country. Many American now share my belief that it would be a serious mistake.

First, there is a practical reason to oppose a war in Iraq. Our military now has been weakened over the last decade, and when we go into Iraq we will clearly dilute our ability to defend our country. We do not enhance our national defense by initiating this war. Besides, it is impractical because of unintended consequences which none of us know about. We do not know exactly how long this will last. It could be a six-day war, a six-month war, or six years or even longer.

There is a military reason for not going to war. We ought to listen to the generals and other military experts, including Colin Powell, Brent Scowcroft, Anthony Zinni, and Norman Schwarzkopf, who are now advising us NOT to go to war. Some have even cautioned against the possibility of starting World War III. They understand that our troops have been spread too thin around the world, and it is dangerous from a purely military standpoint to go to war today.

There is a constitutional argument and a constitutional mistake that could be made. If we once again go to war, as we have done on so many occasions since World War II, without a clear declaration of war by Congress, we blatantly violate the Constitution. I fear we will once again go to war in a haphazard way, by executive order, or even by begging permission from the rotten, anti-American United Nations. This haphazard approach, combined with a lack of clearly defined goal for victory, makes it almost inevitable that true victory will not come. So we should look at this from a constitutional perspective. Congress should assume its responsibility, because war is declared by Congress, not by a President and not by a U.N.

This is a very important matter, and I am delighted to hear that there will be congressional hearings and discussion. I certainly believe we should have a balanced approach. We have already had some hearings in the other body, where we heard only one side of the issue. If we want to have real hearings, we should have a debate and hear evidence on both sides, rather than just hearing pro-war interests arguing for war.

There are even good political reasons for not initiating this conflict. War is not popular. It may seem popular in the short run, when there appears to be an immediate victory and everyone is gloating, but war is not popular. People get killed, and body bags end up coming back. War is very unpopular, and it is not the politically smart thing to do.

There are economic reasons to avoid this war. We can do serious damage to our economy. It is estimated that this venture into Iraq may well cost over a hundred billion dollars. Our national debt right now is increasing at a rate of over \$450 billion yearly, and we are talking about spending another hundred billion dollars on an adventure when we do not know what the outcome will be and how long it will last? What will happen to oil prices? What will happen to the recession that we are in? What will happen to the deficit? We must expect all kinds of economic ramifications.

There are countless diplomatic reasons for not going. All the Arab nations near Iraq object to and do not endorse our plans, and none of our European allies are anxious for this to happen. So diplomatically we make a serious mistake by doing this. I hope we have second thoughts and are very cautious in what we do.

There are philosophical reasons for those who believe in limited government to oppose this war. "War is the health of the state," as the saying goes. War necessarily means more power is given to the state. This additional power always results in a loss of liberty. Many of the worst government programs of the 20th century began during wartime "emergencies" and were never abolished. War and big government go hand in hand, but we should be striving for peace and freedom.

Finally, there is a compelling moral argument against war in Iraq. Military force is justified only in self-defense; naked aggression is the province of dictators and rogue states. This is the danger of a new "preemptive first strike" doctrine. America is the most moral nation on earth, founded on moral principles, and we must apply moral principles when deciding to use military force.

